Expedition to Antarctica

4981.SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of expeditions launched by the Government to Antarctica so far;

(b) whether India has become the first among the 25 previleged nations of the world to set up a liguid nitrogen plant for various scientlfic use on the polar station in Antarctica;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the total amount spent on the last expedition;

(e) whether the Government propose to launch next expedition to Antarctica in near future;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the time by which it is likely to be undertaken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) So far, Sixteen expeditions have been launched to Antarctica. In addition, one expedition each have been launched to the Weddell Sea and Indian Ocean sector of the Southern Oceans.

(b) India is one amongst the few countries to have this facility in Antarctica.

(c) The liquid nitrogen produced by this plant is presently being used for running the Laser Heterodyne system employed for measuring ozone concentration over Antarctica.

(d) The total amount spent on the last expedition was about Rs. 19.28 crores.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) The Seventeenth Indian Scientific Expedition to Antarctica is proposed to be launched for conducting experiments in various fields of polar sciences namely, atmospheric, earth, biological, environmental, medical, engineering and communication sciences.

(g) The Seventeenth Expedition is proposed to be launched by December, 1997.

[Translation]

Shortage of Drinking Water

4982.SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government are aware that there is an acute shortage of dinking water in the Union Territory of Chandlgarh; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to remove this shortage of drinking water during the last five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI. U. VENKATESWARLU) : (a) No report regarding acute shortage of drinking water in the Union Territory of Chandigarh has been received from the U.T. Administration.

(b) Question does not arise. However, proposal regarding augmentation of water supply to Chandigarh Phase IV at a project cost of Rs. 51.80 crores received in this Ministry has been technically approved in June, 1996 for execution by UT Administration.

[English]

Prudential Norms

4983.SHRI N. RAMAKRISHNA REDDY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "RBI prudential norms do the trick for the Bank of Inida" appearing in the 'Asian Age' dated February 11, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter referred therein;

(c) whether the Union Government suffered a lot on account of new accounting rules; and

(d) the measures taken to safeguard the capital growth of banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) It is not correct to say that the Government stands to lose Rs. 327.14 crores due to return of Rs. 93.47 crores which is wrongly presumed to have been divested at a premium of Rs 35/- per share. The Government has written down its investment in the capital of the Bank of India for adjustment of their losses These adjustments have been matched by receipts and recoveries on the capital accounts. These corrections in investments have been made to allow the bank to raise capital from the market. In order to strengthen its capital base the Banks has made a public issue of Rs. 675 crores which has been fully subscribed.

(d) The following measures have been taken by Government.

(i) the Government has contributed Rs. 16346.12 crore upto the year 1996-97 strengthen the capital base of the nationalised bank (ii) The banks with consistent record of profitablity are permitted to access capital market through public issue of shares subject to the equity holding of Government of India not, going below 51% fo total paid up capital.

Setting Up of a Mega Hydro Power Project

4984.SHRI BIR SINGH MAHATO : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to set up a Mega Hydro Power Project in Ajaddhya Hills of Purulia District in West Bengal;